

MUBARAK SUGGESTS ARAB-ISRAEL TALKS WITH U.S. AS HOST

SAYS HE IS 'READY TO HELP'

Urges Washington to Invite a
Jordan-Palestinian Team
to Hold an Initial Parley

By JUDITH MILLER

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CAIRO, Feb. 24 — President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt urged the Reagan Administration today to invite Israel and members of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the United States to lay the groundwork for direct peace talks.

Mr. Mubarak said in an interview that he was willing to act as host for such a meeting in Cairo, or to attend one "anywhere" that was agreeable to all parties.

"Why not?" he declared. "We are ready to help."

The President said he was "very encouraged" by Israel's decision to withdraw from Lebanon, but reiterated his position that more progress had to be made before Egypt would return its ambassador to Israel, who was withdrawn after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Envoy Sent to Meet Peres

Egypt recently sent an envoy to Bucharest, Rumania, to meet with Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel, who visited Rumania last week, and will send another to meet with Mr. Peres soon, Mr. Mubarak said.

He praised the statement on a joint Mideast peace framework signed Feb. 11 by King Hussein of Jordan and Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as a "very good achievement" and stressed that the cooperation agreement was "only a first step."

"We can't reach a solution in one hop," Mr. Mubarak said.

In Washington, Reagan Administration officials said today that they were encouraged by the new interest that Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were showing in negotiations. [Page A3.]

Direct Talks Urged

President Mubarak stressed the importance of direct talks between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, with or without Egypt.

Israel has refused to negotiate with the P.L.O. But Mr. Mubarak asserted that a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation did not necessarily have to include known members of the Palestinian organization. "The P.L.O. has lots of people who are pro-P.L.O. on the West Bank," he said. "Let us be practical."

"Do you know who is or who is not a member of the P.L.O.?" he continued. "How can you confirm this?"

Mr. Mubarak said he thought that the P.L.O. would "coordinate with King Hussein to select moderate figures if

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they want to reach a solution."

Although the Jordanian-P.L.O. accord calls for peace talks under auspices of an international conference that would include participation by the Soviet Union, Mr. Mubarak said he favored direct talks first between Israel and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, with an international conference and participation by Moscow to come after an agreement had been negotiated.

"An international conference could be the last stage," he said, "as a blessing of the solution."

U.S. Opposes Soviet Role

Both Israel and the United States have consistently opposed Soviet participation in Middle East peace talks.

Mr. Mubarak also maintained that the "coordination agreement" between Jordan and the P.L.O. meant that the Palestinian group had accepted United Nations Resolution 242, which calls for the return of occupied territories by Israel in exchange for peace. He urged the United States to disregard what appeared to be conflicting statements by P.L.O. officials about the key U.N. resolution. The United States has refused to recognize the P.L.O. unless it accepts Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist.

The text of the Jordanian-P.L.O. agreement calls for peace based on "the United Nations and Security Council resolutions."

"The points on paper are a step forward," Mr. Mubarak said, referring to the Jordanian-P.L.O. accord. "Let's concentrate on the agreement and not what is mentioned by various factions."

He took a similar view of statements critical of the Jordanian-P.L.O. accord by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, noting that he was not certain whether Mr. Shamir was speaking for the Israeli Government.

'Practical' Approach Urged

During the 90-minute interview at Aruba Palace, Mr. Mubarak did not urge the United States to recognize the P.L.O. or to put pressure on Israel, as he and other senior Egyptian officials have done in previous statements. He repeatedly spoke of the need to be "practical."

In general, Mr. Mubarak avoided criticism of Prime Minister Peres. But he said that recent statements by Mr. Shamir and the Minister of Industry, Ariel Sharon, were "not helpful at all" to the cause of peace.

He complained, in particular, about recent statements by the two officials about the status of Taba, a small strip of land on the Gulf of Aqaba at the Sinai border that is claimed by both sides.

He said it was "very important" to Egyptian national interests and to public opinion that Taba be yielded by the Israelis.

The Egyptians and Israelis have had one round of talks about Taba and another is expected to be held soon, Egyptian officials have said.

President Mubarak seemed relaxed and confident. Speaking in English, he said that he would press his views on



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President Hosni Mubarak at the Aruba Palace yesterday in Cairo.

these and other issues during a trip to Washington that he is tentatively scheduled to begin on March 8.

Mr. Mubarak said that during his visit he would also urge the Reagan Administration to lower the interest rate that Egypt is paying on its military debt. The rates that were negotiated several years ago are now "too high" given prevailing rates, he said.

It has previously been reported that Egypt owes \$250 million to \$300 million in interest payments on its military debt.

Mr. Mubarak said he would also ask for increased economic assistance, but declined to specify how much he would seek.

U.S.-Sudanese Strain Discounted

The Egyptian President made these other points during the interview:

¶He called recent published reports of political strain between the United States and the Sudan "exaggerated."

¶He said he had urged President Reagan not to freeze aid to President Gaafar el-Nimeiry of the Sudan. He also denied published reports that Egypt had withdrawn an air defense unit from the Sudan to try to persuade Mr. Nimeiry to alter his policies. An Egyptian team of 25 technicians had been in the Sudan, he said, helping Khartoum modernize its air defenses and returned to Egypt after its work was completed.

¶He said the Libyan leader, Muammar el-Qaddafi, had offered him \$5 billion if Egypt would abandon the 1978 Camp David peace accords with Israel. "I told him that Egypt would never do this," Mr. Mubarak said, pointing his finger at his guests to emphasize his anger. "Egypt is not Libya," he declared.

On domestic matters, Mr. Mubarak asserted that Egypt had fewer Moslem extremists than almost any other Arab country and that the fundamentalist tide was beginning to ebb in Egypt.

He said he would continue to permit fundamentalists and others who criticize the Government to speak out, and maintained that this policy had helped stem the growth of fundamentalist forces here.

"It's called democracy," Mr. Mubarak said. "If you suppress these forces, they will spread much more."